



## **NEC Elections 2021 – Branch Nomination Request Disabled Members General Seat**

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Dear Colleague

I am seeking your Branch's nomination for re-election to the Disabled Members General Seat on UNISON's National Executive Council.

I was proud to lead the successful campaign to secure two reserved seats for Disabled Members on the NEC in 2016 and honoured to be the first person elected to one of those positions in 2017 and re-elected in 2019 and 2021.

Since then, I have talked to Disabled Members from every region, service group and self-organised group. Members contact me regularly, sometimes for support or advice, some just want a chat and others thank me for being their voice in UNISON.

Last year I played an active role in the Year of Disabled Workers nationally and in my region. The year not only raised issues disabled people face but highlighted the invaluable role our Disabled Members play in the workplace and in wider society.

I was privileged to represent UNISON at the launch of the Disability Employment Charter in Parliament and to move our motion on the same topic at TUC Disabled Workers Conference. The Charter is an exciting new tool that will help us negotiate and influence national policy and I'm looking forward to working with Branches to get employers to commit to the charter.

We've made progress on some issues such as reasonable adjustments and Long-Covid and disability issues have a higher priority in our union than ever before. But our Disabled Members still face prejudice and discrimination every day and there is still a long way to go to achieve equality for our Disabled Members.

We are living in unprecedented times. A Tory government that has demonised disabled people has been in power for over a decade, the cost of living crisis is possibly the worst in living memory and we're still dealing with COVID-19.

The impact on Disabled Members is devastating. The ongoing risk of COVID-19 means many are still very worried about life returning to 'normal.' Rising energy costs are causing extreme poverty for some Disabled Members who are not only struggling to heat their homes but can't afford the electricity for their wheelchairs, dehumidifiers and other equipment they rely on. Even basic telecare packages are becoming unaffordable for some who are just above the benefits threshold.

Disabled Members are also worried about the impact of the expected cuts to public services with many concerned they could lose their job and the support they rely on.

I've been active in Disabled Members since I joined UNISON and was Branch Disabled Members Officer for 11 years. I've been chair of Northern Region Disabled Members for 12 years during which time the group has gone from strength to strength. Before being elected to the NEC I was the Northern Region rep on National Disabled Members Committee (NDMC) for six years during which time I was elected as Deputy Chair once and Chair on two separate occasions. I now represent all Disabled Members on NDMC as part of my NEC position

I previously worked for the Disability Rights Commission and took cases against many organisations including Thomas Cook which led to changes in domestic law and European regulations for disabled people travelling by air. I had a 100% success rate and was the only caseworker to be audited as excellent.

UNISON is a lay-member led union. All NEC Members should reflect the views of the members they are elected to represent. Disabled Members know that whoever represents us must always put Disabled Members first.

Disabled Members are always my priority. If you attended National Delegate Conference (NDC) last year you will be aware of the concerns Disabled Members raised about some NEC actions. I had raised the same concerns on behalf of Disabled Members during NEC meetings but some on the NEC did not want to hear.

Following NDC, I was humbled by the number of Disabled Members who got in touch to say how much they appreciate everything I do on their behalf. They said they don't want someone who votes with a faction or a slate but someone who makes sure their voice is heard and they trust me to speak for them.

I am honoured that so many Disabled Members from every region and nation have asked me to stand again. They want a strong Disabled Members team on the NEC and, after seeing how well we have worked together over the last two years, have asked me to stand alongside Katrina Murray.

It is for this reason that I am asking your Branch to nominate me for the **Disabled Members General Seat** on the NEC and to consider nominating **Katrina Murray** for the Disabled Members Female Seat

I know you may get other nomination requests for this seat but before making a decision I would like to ask you to consider my experience, to talk to Disabled Members, and to think about who you would want on your side if you were disabled.

If you would like me to attend Branch meeting please contact me by email or through Facebook or Twitter.

Disabled Members need a strong voice on the NEC and I hope I can rely on the support of you and your Branch. **Nominations can be submitted between now and 13 February using the online portal.**

Thank you for considering my request.



**Angela Hamilton LLB (Hons), MCIPR**